

**P R O V E**  
*all things,*  
**H O L D F A S T**  
*that which is good:*  
1 Thess. 5. 21.

*Handled*  
*In two Sermons at S. Maries in Cambridge,*  
*the first on the Commencement-Sabbath,*  
*July 1. 1655. the other since.*

By **WILLIAM DILLINGHAM**  
D. D. Master of Emmanuel Colledge in  
Cambridge.

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**PRUDENTER CREDE;**  
*Nec tardè, nec temerè, nec titubanter.*

*Πίστις δὲ ἀεὶ ὁμῶς καὶ ἀντίστα ὠδῶν ἀνδράς.*

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T B M Q I O H  
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Theophil. Dillingham, Procan.

Richard Minshull.

John Arrowsmith.

Anthony Tuckney.

TO  
THE RIGHT WORSHIPFULL  
Mr. FRANCIS ASH,  
of the Citie of London, Merchant,  
and Master of the Moscovia-Company  
there.

Honoured Sir ;



But you were pleased to desire might be published; I desire you would be pleased to accept this dedication of, both as an acknowledgement of the power you have to command me, and as a testimony of my thankfulness to you for your many favours to my self, and your transcendent beneficence unto the Colledge whereunto I stand related: The particulars whereof I should have displayed, but that I know that this were the ready way to unspeak your acceptance; nor indeed can I hope that this poore paper will ever be able to out-wing that Fame which is already gone forth, or to come into the hands of any, whose ears have not been already filled with the report of so noble, so pious, and so seasonable a gift. For, the perfume of this box of costly ointment, which you have expended to further the preaching and propagation of the Gospel, hath already filled the whole house of the present age, and shall make your name become as an ointment poured forth, embalming it to all succeeding generations: For, this which you have done shall hereafter be told for a memoriall of you; yea, wheresoever the Gospel shall be preached by those who shall have been bred up here by your bounty, even there shall the souls of many have cause to blesse and glorifie God on your behalf. But I may go no farther, lest I should transgresse and break truce with your humility.

## The Epistle Dedicatory.

*As for the subject of this discourse, it is none other than what hath been often insisted upon at large by many of our learned and judicious Divines, whose books I am not worthy, and whose works I am not able to carry after them. But I do not, at all fear that it will be any whit the lesse acceptable unto your self, who love the good old way of sober truth, however many now a dayes do thirst after novelty; a good account ( I think ) may be given of both from that of our Saviour, Luke 5. 39. No man having drunk old wine straightway desireth new; for, he saith the old is better; nor yet will it, I hope, be altogether uselesse unto others, seeing S. Peter thought good in both his Epistles, to stirre up the pure minds of believers by way of remembrance, 2 Pet. 3. 1. and we therefore indeavour to understand truths, that we may be able to call them to mind in the time of our need: So that what wants novelty to recommend it to our fancies and understandings, may yet prove welcome unto our consciences, and may be both profitable and acceptable, because seasonable.*

*And indeed, Sir, that which first made me pitch my thoughts upon this subject; was the sad consideration of that giddinesse and drunkennesse of Spirit in matters of Religion, which so many in these our dayes are distempered withall, running to and fro, and staggering like a drunken man, out of one opinion into another; and yet after all their seekings, they are still to seek for the truth, the way whereof they have not known. Many causes hereof might be assigned; two I shall desire your leave here to remember and make mention of.*

*And First, I do impute and charge this Vertigo and Me-grime in religion, this unfaithfulnesse to truth, upon the account of newfanglednesse, that pica of our nature, the unreasonable desire and love of novelty, which is so very much predominant in these our times, as if S. Paul's prophesie were now fulfilled in the eares of many, ( 2 Tim. 4. 3, 4. ) For, the time will come when they will not indure sound doctrine, but after their  
own*



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own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching eares, And they shall turn away their eares from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. *Let a man that is a setter-forth of new opinions but open his shop, and bow doth the multitude throng about him! like those Athenians that took S. Paul to be such a one, Acts 17. 19.* Saying, may we know what this new doctrine, which thou speakest, is? for thou bringest certain strange things to our eares; we would know therefore what these things mean. For, *(we must know that)* all the Athenians and strangers, which were there, spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or heare some new thing). *But such as desire news onely because it is news, will not much care whether it be true or false; and those that judge of truth by the newnesse of it, may fall into ten errours e're they light upon one truth; Antiquity is no sufficient mark of truth, (witness the Gibeonites, who had old shoes on their feet, and mouldy bread in their hands, and yet at the same time brought a lie in their mouths) much lesse is novelty; for, Truth is of the elder house; and as for those that entertain truth onely because it is new, though it be truth which they entertain, yet are they not like to keep it long; for, it will not be long new. It is much if a news-book be reade over twice: The Athenian news-mongers made account they favoured S. Paul highly, when they promised to heare him tell his story over again a second time, Acts 17. 32.* A second-hand truth? away with it to the brokers. Thus children and fools were ever admirers of new clothes; and that which was alwayes the praise of an Almanack, is now become with these men the onely taking qualification of doctrine and opinions. That luxury went high that had every day a new suite, and these can scarce think themselves right drest, unlesse they have dayly new changes of opinions. But since the Devil knows their humour so well, they shall want for no news, so long as his invention can afford it; and when that fails, the old serpent

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*knows how to slip his skin; and that which is old in it self will be new to them; blanch but an old Arrian, and out comes a Socinian spick and span new. And indeed, what are most of our new-lights, but old-heresies, the Devils old cards plaid over again, and the pieces of the old Serpent crawling to find one another from under the Anathema's of foregoing ages?*

*But a second cause to which I think the unsettlednesse of many men may be justly imputed, is their not being well-grounded in the first principles of Religion. Some never were catechised at all, but have been nursed up in grosse and palpable ignorance; no wonder if such as have no ballast at all in them, be made the sport and pastime of every wind of doctrine; no wonder if such as have been bred all their lives time in a dungeon, do become dizzie, and count all light new when they come first into it. My self have known some, that much cryed up for new discoveries some crude and raw apprehensions of those very truths, which others, who had the happinesse of better education, had been very well acquainted with, and grounded in from their child-hood. But others there are, who have learned the truth, more by rote than by heart, and received it from other men upon their bare word, without seeing any evidence for it. These men when they come once to see an appearance of reason for the contrary opinion, ( which is more then ever themselves had for the taking up of truth ) it is not much to be wondred at, if such are easily drawn aside to error; and then it is but very natural, for them to call error light, and to condemn truth for darknesse, because they never understood it: And then if a little pride get but in once ( as it is never farre off ) to mix with their ignorance, how easy a thing is it for them to grow conceited of their new attainments ( which yet wiser men cannot but pity them for ) to despise the truth ( which before they did but ravish ), and to inveigh against those who formerly taught it them; calling them blind guides, whereas the fault was, themselves had been blind followers;*  
and

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and supposing them to have no ground for the truth, because indeed themselves never had any: yea and to loath the very ordinances in which the truth had been dispensed to them. Thus the best food, if it lie on the stomach undigested, is oftentimes vomited up again with the greatest abhorrency and detestation. What a sad condition have those men brought themselves into! A spirit of error hath not onely taken possession of them, but hath also bolted himself in, and made them hate the very means of their recovery: By this time the Devil hath got such a commanding power over them, that he drives them about in herds and droves, as he doth the Quakers at this day. Who, that it might be apparent unto all men that they are seduced, are become mere Vagrants. Whereas had they at first entertained truth upon good grounds, they would never have proved so false unto it; had it taken due possession of them, or they of it, they would never thus have quitted house and home, to be carried about like empty clouds, and wandering starres, which, though they may pretend unto new light, yet are they fast bound in chains of darknesse, and unlesse they do timely repent, S. Jude tells us what their doom shall be, verse 13. To whom is reserved the blacknesse of darknesse for ever.

Now then, Sir, Since the danger is so great, what need have we all, as to beg of God that he by his Spirit would keep us steadfast in the truth, so also our selves to neglect no means that may be available thereunto; among which I conceive this one to be none of the least, that we endeavour to understand our selves well in our religion, to see truth in clear Scripture-evidence, to be intelligent and knowing, not merely-believing Christians, to be rooted and well-grounded in the Faith, so shall we be steadfast and unmoveable. For which end if it shall please God to make this discourse in any measure profitable (as I hope it is not altogether unseasonable) unto his people; neither shall I have

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have any cause to repent my self that I ran this adventure, nor you to be sorry that you have undergone the trouble of this dedication. And thus, Sir, I take my leave, recommending you to the gracious protection of the Almighty, and to the riches of his love in our Lord Christ Jesus.

Sir, Your Assured friend,

much obliged to

serve and honour you,

William Dillingham.

Cambridge:

March 18. 1656.

# I. Theſſal. v. 21.

Πάντα δοκιμάζειτε, τὸ καλὸν κτήεσθε.

*Prove all things, hold fast that  
which is good.*



Atan, the grand enemy of our salvation, knowing that it is the truth which must make us free, as it was a lie by which he brought us all at first into captivity, labours by all means possible to keep men from the knowledge of the truth: and that,

*First*, if he can, by detaining them in grosse and palpable ignorance, those *chains of darknesse*. Thus doth he the Turks and Indians to this very day; and many millions of souls under the Papacy, by a blind obedience and as blind a faith, the *Cottiers faith* they call it, I doubt 'twill come to th' fire at the last.

*Secondly*, If this will not do but men will needs be knowing, then he labours to seduce them into error, giving them husks for bread, *pro Deâ nubem*. This old deceiver wants not his *strophæ*, nor his methods. He will *Proteus*-like screw himself into all modes and figures that so he may the better deceive. Sometimes he assumes the shape of an *Oecumenicall Bishop*, and dictates errors out of an infallible chair, intoxicating with the cup of his errors the *Kings* of the earth: otherwhile putting on the appearance of a *simple plain man*, he creeps into houses, and the greatest game he flies at are but *silly women*. One while he presents error under the reverend cloak of *antiquity*; anon he bethinks

B

himself

Prove all things.

himself that the newest fashion will give best content, and so they shall be *new lights*.

*Thirdly*, If both these fail, then he raises a dust of controversy, that so people may not be able to see the truth, or not to know it when they see it. He finds it good fishing in troubled waters, and cutting purses in an hubub: For while people are distracted to see so many opinions in religion, whereof they are sure but one can be true, (and which that is they are not able to judge) they resolve to be standers-by untill the learned be agreed, supposing it the safest course and easiest to avoid error, by being of no opinion at all.

*Fourthly*, Another device he hath, to bring truth it self into suspicion. Thus of old did he set the Poets on work to invent fables like unto many histories recorded in holy Scriptures, that when the falshood of those should be discovered, the truth of these might be call'd in question. Just as he makes some play the hypocrites, that when their hypocrisie is detected, all professours may be thought to be like them.

But let us argue *à contra*. If the Scripture were not true, sure the devil would never seek to gain credit to his lies by imitating of it. It's an argument that there is true coin in the world, because men counterfeit it: had there never been such an one as *Richard Plantagenet*, we had never heard of *Perkin Warbeck*.

Reject not therefore all coin; for, there is some good; receive not all heedlessly, because there is some counterfeit; but bring it all to the test, and to the touch-stone. To think that we must therefore be of no opinion because others are of so many, is to be of the worst opinion of all: for, who so adheres to a particular opinion, may indeed be *ith' wrong*; but he that is of no opinion cannot possibly be *ith' right*. If other men do so differ in their opinions, it  
concerns

concerns us to be well-resolved in our own judgements. If the winds and waves be so boisterous without, the more need is there of a good ballast within. All cannot have the truth, therefore make them not thy rule; yet all pretend to it, therefore give them an hearing. Condemn not all, because there's truth among them; neither approve all, because some must needs be false. Let us therefore neither swallow all by a blind credulitie, nor reject all by a rash precipitancy, but follow the advice of the Apostle in the text; *Prove all things, but hold fast that which is good.*

The words contain in them a double dutie which all believers are bound unto; as well the people as their pastours, every one in their severall orbe: Although more immediately they seem to be directed to the people, who in the words immediately foregoing are forbidden to despise prophesyings, and here are bid to trie them all, and to hold fast that which is good. Of both these in their order. First of the first.

*Prove all things.*

**H**ere there are two things to be spoken to by way of explication: First, What it is to *try*. Secondly, *What* it is that we are to try.

For the *first*, By *proving* or trying here is *not* meant that we should *experimentally* be of all opinions; many such seekers instead of finding truth, have lost themselves in a maze of errour, and an inextricable labyrinth of perplexitie. 'Tis *πείρα* *δοκαστική*, not *δογματική*. Nor is it meant that we should all *judices agere in foro externo* sit and determine controversies, binding up all others to acquiesce in our decisions: but, as it concerns all Christians (*quà tales*), to *prove* or try is an act of judgement to be exercised by eve-



Prove all things.

ry one within the private court of his own conscience in order to his own particular embracing or rejecting of any doctrine offered to his faith. Which act is no further obligatory to any other man, than the grounds thereof being made known shall merit his assent.

But *secondly* what are we here to understand by *examine*, *all things*; must we examine all things? surely then we shall have work enough. If we must alwayes be examining, what will become of all holy living? *I answer*, a man may live by rule, as well as build by rule. But further, Though we must try *all things* here meant, yet is it not meant that we should be *alwayes* trying of them. But I conceive the *etiam* in the text is not to be taken in the utmost extent of its possible latitude.

Truth fears no fair triall; her face is not painted, and therefore the fairer for the washing; & she is justified of her children, yet is she sometimes condemned by strangers that know her not; and her face may possibly get a scratch in the scuffle, and herself prove (though perhaps more fair, yet) in the mean while lesse fruitfull; and therefore desires not to live alwayes under dispute. And indeed some truths seem by their own nature to be exempt from triall; there must be some *basis* to move upon, and that must be immoveable; *Dei nō est*; some first rule, and how shall that be tried? some first principles, and how shall they be proved? He that will learn must first believe, and doubtlesse there are *primò-credita* in Divinity as well as *primò-cognita* in Philosophy; & the mind assents to the one by a *prima fides*; as it doth to the other by the habit called *intelligentia*. Such there must needs be to give a solid *basis* to discourse, and had they *prius* to prove them by, they were not *prima*. These have usually been acknowledged by all for that native evidence that shines in them, bringing letters credentiall writ in  
their

their very faces; yet I know not how of late some out of the abundance of their leisure or curiositie have been pleased to question them. We lately digged for fundamentall *laws* till we had like to have pulled the house down about our ears; and some have digged for principles in *philosophy* till they have quite lost them in the rubbish; certainly the man was either very idle or very melancholick when he began to suspect he might be deceived in thinking he had a being (which yet was impossible), and came to *Cogito ergo sum*. But, that which is worse yet, have we not some who call in question the very fundamentals of *religion* also? they are but bad builders, who, as the Apostle speaks, are alwayes *laying* the foundation; when then shall we think that they will set on the roof and bring the building to perfection who are alwayes *digging of it up*? I shall say no more; but I had thought the truth of the scriptures had been out of gun-shot, and that God might have been believed upon his own word. If once it appeare to us to be the word of God, we are not to call in question the truth or equity of it. Let us not spend our time in calling those truths into question, whereof we have already entertained a firm and well-grounded belief, but presse forwards toward those things which remain, and practise what we have believed. The blowing of this wind makes the tree take deeper root, (and it is well if it doth alwayes so) but yet in the mean while it oftentimes blowes down the fruit. But what is it then that we must try? *try the spirits*, saith S. *John* 1. 4. 1. and try *prophesings* mentioned here in the verse before my text; the sense and meaning is one and the same of both, try all doctrines that are offered to you by any man whatsoever, how great, how learned soever he be, receive them not upon his *words* *son*, but bring them first unto the beam, unto the touch-stone: whence arises the proposition to be spoken to.

Doctr.

That it is the duty of all Christians to examine the doctrine which they heare, before they fully entertain it as a principle of faith and life: a truth of very great importance, but because there hath been already so much written, I shall need now to speak the lesse, and shall content my self with two arguments onely for confirmation of it, the one from Scripture, the other from Reason, and be brief in both.

Reas. 1.

The first argument I shall take from Scripture which doth expressly both command and commend this duty to us: it commands it Mark 4. 24. Βλέψτε τὴν ἀκοήν, have an eye to your hearing, take heed what you heare: as also in the 1. epist. of John chap. 4. vers. 1. Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God: it commends the practise of this duty in the Bereans Acts 17. 11. where 'tis said of them that they were εὐλαβέστεροι more nobly-spirited than those of Thessalonica, for that they searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so as the Apostles preached, notwithstanding they were assisted by an infallible spirit. It was not any slownesse in them to believe which made them examine, but an holy prudence; for, so the words are. They received the word with all readinesse of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so; they received them readily and yet searched, making no more hast then good speed.

Object.

But Bellarmine thinks to take off the edge of this place of Scripture by this distinction. The Bereans were but beginners and had not yet entertained the faith, and therefore might examine: but such as are already Christians and believe the Churches infallibility are bound to believe the doctrine it propoſeth, without examination.

Answ.

I answer, first by way of concession, that as many as believe the Churches infallibility, are bound consequently to believe whatever she propounds, as farre as an error can bind

bind them. But *secondly*, If all be beginners but those that believe *that*, truly for our parts We Protestants do profess our selves to be *Bereans*, and therefore I hope he will give *Us* leave to examine their doctrine in the balance of the Sanctuary, and so we have and found it light. And *thirdly*, is *Bellarmino* sure the *Bereans* were not believers when they searched? since *they received the word with all readinesse of mind*, ( and then 'tis added ) *and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so*. But *fourthly*, If they were not, I wonder how men before they believe should be better able to judge *then* afterwards; and how they should come to loose that power and privilege by beleiving.

Besides these there are many other Scriptures, which do *ex consequenti* not onely permit, but also require to try the doctrines before we entertain them: as *Matth. 24. 4.* where our Saviour bids *See that no man seduce you*: and the Apostle Paul in *Ephes. 5. 6.* *Let no man deceive you with vain words*: and *2 Thessal. 2. 3.* *Let no man deceive you by any means*. To what purpose are all these monitory cautions, if we may not try; nay, do they not implicitly require and command us to try and examine the doctrines, whoever they be that bring them? S. Paul is bold in *Gal. 1. 8, 9.* *Though we or an Angel from heaven should preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed*. And that you may see that this expresseion proceeded neither from rashnesse nor passion, but a most advised and well resolved deliberation, he repeats the words in the verse following: *As we said before, so say I now again; If any preach any other Gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed*. Whence I observe these two things to my present purpose; *first*, that there must be an *examen*, else how could they know it was another Gospel, and so reject it? and *secondly*, that the hearers as such; and not teachers were to be the judges, unless wee'l say they were bound to curse themselves.

But

*Reas. 2.* But the truth in hand may be further evidenced to us by *reason* thus : Because we must neither embrace all doctrines, nor reject all, nor take some such as come next, no nor the truth it self upon slight grounds ; therefore we must examine.

1. We must not reject all; for, so we shall be sure to reject the truth; and besides, we do ow so much reverence to the name of God, as not rashly to reject without *examen*, any doctrine that hath but an appearance of any just pretence unto it.

2. Nor may we embrace all promiscuously; for, so we shall be sure to be in the wrong; and I see not how possibly the soul can at the same time assent unto contradictions, and yet such there are found among opinions.

3. Nor in the third place may we take up a certain number of opinions as they come next to hand, as they are offered to us by the place where we live, or the next comer by: for, so there will be great danger of falling into error; and truth is of more concernment to us, than that we should adventure it upon the hazard of such a contingency.

4. Nor lastly may we entertain truth it self (if we should happen on it) on so slight grounds; if we take no better hold of it, we shall never be able to hold it fast : If we build upon such a sandie foundation, how do we think to stand, when the winds and waves of temptation and persecution shall arise ? It remains therefore that we must examine, that so we may both refuse the evil, and also hold fast that which is good. And for the further quickning of us unto this duty, I shall propound onely two considerations, and very briefly.

*Consid. 1.* *First*, Let us seriously consider what great danger there is in being deceived ; our souls are at the stake; no less than the everlasting good of our souls is concerned in it: for, error

your in understanding begets error in life and practise, and the Scripture tells us of *damnable heresies*; and what ever some may think of speculative errors, yet surely as they proceed from that maim in the understanding which is the effect of original sinne, and as they are cherished and abetted by corruption in the will, they are sinns and make us guilty. For the actions of the understanding as well as of the other faculties are *ὑποτασσονται*, under the law of God, and the will shall answer at Gods tribunal for not putting the understanding to school to Scripture, as well as for not bridling the passions, and not governing the outward man. Since then there is such danger in error as you have heard, had we not need be carefull? had we not need examine? especially considering,

What danger there is of being deceived, which is the second consideration. For, *first*, the *best* are subject to error themselves, and so may (though unwittingly and unwillingly) be means of seducing others, who do not examine; and then their godliness and learning, which were wont to keep them *from* errors, will become arguments to draw others *into* them. But then *secondly*, how many *false prophets*, deceivers, and seducers are there in the world! who make it their *designe* and purpose to deceive. *MANY* shall come in my name (saith our Saviour, *Matth. 24. 5.*) and shall deceive many: and *Many false prophets ARE gone out into the world*, 1 *John 4. 1.* and, that which makes them the more dangerous, they are indefatigably industrious in their way, compassing the earth (with their master), and compassing sea and land to make a proselyte. Which they do the more easily effect by reason of the *craft* and subtilty which they use. We have it exprest emphatically in *Ephes. 4. 14.* *Be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftinesse,* whereby

## Prove. all. things.

whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Our Saviour hath foretold us that they should come as wolves in sheeps-clothing, and the Apostle ἐν ὀνόματι ψευδολόγων, and ἐν πτωχεύουσιν\* and again, *With all power, and signes, and lying wonders, and with all deceivablenesse of unrighteousnesse*, 2 Thessal. 2. 9, 10. All which places do loudly bespeak our earnest care to look to our selves, and to examine doctrines before we embrace them, lest unawares we entertain doctrines of devils in stead of the truths of God.

By this little that hath been said I hope it does appeare that it is our duty to examine. But two things there be which are necessarily requisite to the right performance of it as we ought. An infallible *rule*, and a *faculty* rightly prepared; the one *by* which, the other *with* which we are to judge.

1. Requisite,  
A faculty.

I. There must be a *faculty*, or a soul rightly prepared: and that must be

1. Reason-  
able.

1. A *reasonable soul*; this is the *subject* of faith and all our other graces, and is the *principium quod* of all the actions that flow from them. Faith is a *rational* grace, although it do not alwayes act *discursively*, (E. g. in its assent to the *primò credita*, which is to a testimony, not for a testimony) no more than the understanding does by discourse induce it self to an assent unto first notions.

2. Enlighte-  
ned.

2. This soul or faculty must be *enlightened*, and assisted by the holy Spirit, else it cannot apprehend aright spiritual things. *The natural man perceives not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*, 1 Cor. 2. 14. Not but that a natural man may apprehend and assent unto divers truths recorded in the Scriptures, but not with a *saving* kind of apprehension and assent, nor as they are τὰ ὁρα πνευμαλῶ, the things of the Spirit; so they are not known but in a spiritual manner, and by the assistance  
of



## Prove all things.

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of the same Spirit. Which *assistance* consists in the infusion of an habit of spiritual wisdom and understanding, and the Spirit's gracious excitation of it, and concurrence with it, whereby the eyes of a believer's mind being enlightened, he is enabled in some measure to discern and apprehend the truths and will of God, objectively revealed and propounded to him by the same Spirit in the Scriptures.

This is that *donum intellectus* and *illumination*, which is bestowed upon every believer at his first conversion, though in a lesser measure both of evidence and object than afterwards: for it grows and increases according to the proportion of faith which God hath dealt to every man, and extends it self as large as a divine faith does, from which it is inseparable. Now because all believers have sooner or later a divine faith of all things necessary for them so to be believed, and some of more, accordingly is this *donum intellectus* dispensed; all have some, more or lesse, none all, but onely *Christ*, to whom alone the Spirit was given without measure, and of whose fulness we all receive grace for grace. And as it is of the same extent, so is it of the same original with a divine faith, wrapt in the same womb, and nursed by the same breasts; it's both attained and kept by the self same means, prayer, hearing of the word, reading and meditating on it. This the Papists are not willing to allow unto private believers, yet *Aquinas* is cleare in the point;  
*\* Nullus habens graviam caret dono intellectus, quod nunquam se subtrahit sanctis circa ea qua sunt necessaria ad salutem.* A  
 very cleare and full testimony: So that I shall forbear to adde any more.

3. That the soul may be rightly fitted for to judge, it must be *sanctified*. 23. 22.  
q. 8. art. 4.

*First*, It must have a reverence of the divine Majesty and of his word; then will it not so boldly go about with

## Prove all things.

*Socinus* and our modern circulatours to baffle Scripture, just as a Sophister would deal with a peice of *Aristotle*; Then shall we not profanely abuse it by I know not what kind of mystical, & cabalistical interpretations. Is this to reverence the word of *God*? would any man take it well at our hands to have his words so played withall, so screwed and wrested from their simple and most apparent sense and meaning?

Secondly, the soul must be *humble*. Such the Lord himself hath undertaken to teach, they shall be *ὑποτακτικοί*, but *ὑποτακτικὸς ἀντιπάλαιος* he resists the proud, while he gives grace to the humble; grace and glory and no good thing will he withhold from those that fear him, *Psal.* 25. 14. and 84. 11. A proud man is a bad scholar, he will confide in himself, rather than in *God*; he is fond of his own opinions, and will not yield unto the truth, being stubborn and disobedient in will and affections; but if any one be humble and obedient, if any one will do *God's* will, he shall know the doctrine whether it be of *God*. There is great need of humility also upon this account, that those who have the gift in a lesser measure, be not presumptuous so as to wade beyond their depth. Which Saint *Paul* thought a seasonable caution in the matter in hand: *Rom.* 12. 3. *Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For, I say through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith: the words are emphaticall.* *Μὴ ὑπερφορεῖν μετ' ὃ δέ σοι φρονεῖν, ἀλλὰ φρονεῖν εἰς τὸ σωφρονεῖν* not out of an overweening opinion of self-sufficiency to enterprise things beyond their strength, but to think soberly according as *God* hath dealt to every man the measure of faith, for, according to that is the measure of this gift, as you heard before. I might

might adde also in the *third* place, that the soul must be in-  
duced with a sincere love of the truth, that it must obey the  
truth, and mortifie its own corruptions: but of these more  
conveniently afterwards.

Thus much may suffice for the first thing required that  
we may judge aright, a faculty rightly prepared:

2. The second is the *Rule* according to which we must judge, by which we must examine all doctrines, and ac-  
cording to their agreeing or disagreeing with it, either en-  
tertain or reject them. 2. *Requisite*  
*A Rule.*

This rule must be (1.) in it self infallible, (2.) in re-  
spect of us clear and known, (3.) in respect of the doctrines  
to be tryed it must be adequate. These are agreed upon as  
necessary properties of a rule of divine faith.

Now such a rule are not

*First*, the maxims of naturall reason. For (1.) they are  
farre from being *infallible*, many of them being but the  
product of humane discourse and fallible observation, and  
therefore some of them false, if they be extended beyond  
the sphere of Philosophy, for whose meridian onely they  
were calculated at the first. I do not think there is any truth  
in Philosophy which contradicts any truth in Divinity, yet  
am I sure that many sayings are true in Philosophy, which  
are false in Divinity. For, maxims and general rules being  
but collections observed from particulars, if the survey be  
short, *ad nimis pauca respiciens*, not taking in all particulars,  
the verdict or maxime must needs be defective, and the ge-  
neral rule be liable to exceptions. So that a rule may be true  
in Philosophy as to all those particulars included within the  
object of Philosophy, but false if stretched to take in the  
things of Divinitie: as an observation concerning men may  
be true of men in *France* or *Italy*, but false if applyed to  
those in *England*, who were never attended to in the raising.

*Not,*

1. *Reason.*

(2.) As these maxims are not infallible, so neither are they adequate to the things to be believed, and therefore cannot make a fit rule of divine faith. For there are many divine truths which are nothing at all of kind to any peice of naturall knowledge, neither flowing from these maxims, nor being reducible to them. (3.) It is not possible for any of those maxims to be the foundation of any divine faith at all; for all assent that is wrought in the soul by them is but either science or opinion; both which arise from the evidence of the thing, whereas faith assents unto an article without any such respect, but meerly for the sake of a testimony; and if the faith be divine, such also is the testimony which produceth it.

And yet the *Socinians* make reason the rule of their faith. *Quod absurdum est rationi, debet esse falsum*, saith one; others more modest or more subtile will seem to grant that reason ought to believe what God sayes, be it never so contrary to their apprehensions; but then when the question is put whether God say such a thing or no, here they will deny it if it agree not with their maxims. Thus what they give with the one hand they take away again with the other; they passe it in the head, but stop it in the house; decline the volie but take the rebound, which comes all to one at last.

But how little reason there is for so doing, especially in *hac fœce Romali*, in this Apostate and fallen condition of humane nature, the alone sense of our own infirmities and weakneses may sufficiently convince.

O but yet *Right Reason*! Ay, where is it? many make account they have it, and that in those very things wherein yet they contradict one another. Some think *Aristotle* did but bid his scholar go look; when he made the judgement of a wiseman the rule of vertues mediocritie; many pretend to be wise, and many more think themselves such,  
but

but it's seldome that either prove so. So that indeed a man may sooner find vertue than a wise-man, especially considering that he had need to be one himself to know one when he meets him. All reason then is not right, nor have all men right reason, that think they have it; reason it self then stands in need of a rule to be tryed by. Reason is then right when it is true, and then only true when it judgeth according to the truth of things themselves; now things to be believed are contained in Scripture, let us carry our reason thither, and trie it by them. For, as *Amesius* very well, *Ratio qua dicitur recta, si absoluta rectitudo spectetur, non alibi nobis est quarendam quam ubi existit, id est, in Scripturis; neque differt (quatenus spectat bonum & æquum) a voluntate Dei ad nostra vite directionem revelatâ. Medulla lib. 2. cap. 2.*

So then, although the *maxims* of natural reason may be of singular use in Divinity, if rightly limited by the Scriptures, yet are they not fit to be *canon*, they are both too short and too weak to make a rule of divine faith of.

Secondly, nor is *Antiquity* such a rule as is required. *Antiquity* barely considered is no good mark, much lesse rule of truth. The *Romanists* in giving marks of the true Church do as *Painters*, who draw the *Virgine Mary* by their own *Mistresses*; they do not choose the Church by her marks, but indeavour to make their marks by their Church: In like manner here, they do not square their doctrine by the true rule, but strive to find out a rule that will fit their doctrine, and yet herein too they are oft-times much to seek.

They cry up *Antiquity* very much, bidding us ask for the old way; for multitude of dayes shall teach us wisdom; and make account they have praised themselves all this while;

while; but no such matter, unless we should look at antiquity and nothing else: but then I know who may vie with them, the devil was a liar from the beginning. For our parts we profess we do very much reverence antiquity, but it must be then in conjunction with truth; we cannot admire old errors: but as *Solomon* speaks of the hoary head, *Prov. 16. 31. The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness.* We shall alwayes rise up before a reverend hoary-headed truth; but we must have something else besides its gray hairs to know it by, lest in stead of truth we salute her mask, and worship a cloud in stead of a goddesse. And as for the Papists, for all their boasting so much of the antiquity of their doctrine, we can easily shew them who brought in this doctrine, and that doctrine into their Church; this ceremony and that ceremony, this corruption and that corruption. We need no microscope to see how patcht their coat is, of how different a thread and spinning, so that it could never hang together, but that the new would rend the old in funder, the strong the rotten, were it not for that same Catholick plaister of infallibility. But while we make the Scriptures to be our rule, our doctrine is ancients than much of theirs pretends to be.

3. Councils  
and Fathers.

Thirdly, not the writings of the *Ancient Fathers*, nor *Councils*; neither of these are fit to be made the rule of a divine faith. We do attribute much unto the judgements of those ancient Fathers, those primitive Saints and Worthies, whether exprest in their private writings, or signified in lawfull Councils.

When the *Councils* were such as they ought to be, consisting of holy, able, and learned Pastours of the Church, we look upon them as bright constellations, whose light was the greater because of their conjunction. They had not onely *donum intellectus*, and that in a great measure too

as they were single Christians; but also *donum interpretationis*, as they were Pastours of the Church: and while they conferred together, seeking *God*, they were in the use of the best means to find out truth, and under a promise also, but not of infallibility; and therefore although we cannot make them the rule of our faith, yet ought we not rashly to reject them when they are offered to us; nor to slight their judgments, as if they were nothing worth, but seriously to examine their reasons and grounds on which they went.

We honour the *Fathers* as men whom Gods providence raised up and indued with gifts to quell the growing heresies of their times; and doublesse if they were more looked into, they would furnish us with tried weapons, armour approved to subdue the self-same heresies risen again among us in these our dayes, and prove as successfull as that stratagem of the *Scythians* was, who put their rebel-slaves to flight, by but shewing them the rods wherewith they had been wont to whip them. But though we honour the Fathers, yet we dare not worship them, we may not believe in them, nor make their writings the rule of our faith. This is that which themselves did never desire, but forbid and abhorre the thought of; they seem to say to us, Stand up; for, we also were but men subject to like infirmities with you; *Ὁμοῖοι μὲν*. Worship *God*, believe in *him*. I doubt not but they that mended many faults in their own writings, left some behind, and I wish others had not added more. We admit them as witnesses, but not as a rule, since they also were but fallible.

The Church of *Rome* ha's boasted so long of the Fathers, till at length they grow almost weary of it. At first they had like to have put the *Centuriatours* out of countenance; but afterwards Bishop *Jewell* was so bold as to challenge them, in a Sermon at *Paul's Crosse*, (afterward printed)



ed) and to offer that if they could produce any one ancient Father, General Council, or example of the Primitive Church for the first six hundred yeares, that sided with them against us in any one of 27 articles by him named, and in controversie between us, he would subscribe to them. This challenge Dr. *Humsfries* thought was more then he needed to have made; yet having made it he made it good against *Harding*, and yet died a Protestant: and this was no more then we all promise, sayes learned Dr. *Whitaker* against *Campion's* fifth reason. So that the Jesuite needed not to have arrogated to the Church of Rome that privilege of the Jews, *Whose are the Fathers*: and *Malone* might have spared his scurrilous title-page against the Reverend and learned Primate; *Though you have ten thousand USHERS, yet have ye not many FATHERS*. We boast not of ten thousand, but are glad that we have one worth ten thousand of their *Popish-Fathers*, and as many head-masters of their schools to boot. But we hope we have the Fathers with us, and I am sure we honour them more then they, and yet make them not the rule of our faith neither. They honour them not as Fathers, but as Lords and Masters; as *Peter Cotton* was wont to call him, My Lord St. *Austin*.

*At servum scis te genitum, blandéque fateris,  
Dum dicis dominum, Sosibiane, Patrem.*

Let them therefore be the vassals, if they please, while we are the true and genuine sonnes of those ancient Fathers. And yet some of the Papists (to say the truth) cared not overmuch for the judgement of the Fathers, when it made against them. Cardinal *Cajetan* will not fear to go against the generall torrent of all the ancient Doctours \*; for which *Camus* indeed blames him, but then *Andradius* takes his part: and I am sure what *Cajetan* said, was no other then what

\* *Præfat.*  
*in Pentat.*

what was put in practise by *Maldonate*, *Fansenius*, and divers others.

*Fourthly*, Nor is the judgement or testimony of the Church <sup>4. Church,</sup> a sufficient rule of divine faith. The Papists cry up the Church, as much as the Jews of old did the Temple: but by the Church they mean their own; which, by that time the Jesuites have done with it, is nothing else but the Pope. But wee'll keep their term *the Church*, whose testimony they say is infallible, and necessary to a divine faith of any one article in religion; and although *de-Valentia* and *Cannus* would fain mince the matter, and make it onely necessary as a *condition*; yet that will not serve the Romanists turn, which *Bellarmino* and *a-Sacro-bosco* knew well enough, and therefore make the testimony of the Church necessary, as a *medius terminus* and *Cause* of assent in all divine faith; and so they must say or come over to us. Now infallibility as it is required to a rule of doctrine, is nothing else but the constant assistance of the holy Ghost, which the Papists require a man to believe that their Church hath, before he can believe so much as that there is an holy Ghost: for, that's one article of faith, none of which (say they) can be believed without the infallible testimony of their Church. Wee'll leave the Jesuites to distinguish themselves out of this contradiction, if they can, and i'th' mean while let us examine their proofs.

They offer us Tradition for proof; but for them to go about to prove the Churches infallibility from the tradition of the Church, is to beg the question. Let them first convince us that the Church is infallible as it gives the tradition, and then wee'll spare them any further pains to prove that it is infallible.

They often attempt to prove it to us by Scripture; by which very practise they do but condemn themselves: For,

First, then it seems the Scriptures infallibility may be first known, before and without the believing of the Church's infallibility, *quod minimè vellent*: for, then the latter may be spared. And secondly, hereby once for all they appeal to mens private judgements, and that in a point on which their whole cause turns: and if they think the Scriptures so cleare for the Church's infallibility that a private Christian may discern it, I do appeal to themselves, whether many other articles be not laid down more clearly in Scripture: we say all. Well, but it may be some will say the Church's infallibility is first known, before we know the Scriptures to be infallible. I say then, 1. let them prove it. 2. why do they go about to prove it by Scripture? 3. let them avoid the above-named contradiction.

Or if they'll be willing to draw stakes with us, and have neither the infallibility of the one, nor of the other to be first believed: Then first, let them never more quote Scripture for the Church's infallibility. Secondly, let them not require us to prove the Scriptures by the testimony of the Church. Thirdly, they must give us leave to fetch all the articles of our faith immediately from the Scriptures without the midwifry of their Porphyry-chair: and then wee'l easily grant them (if it will do them any good) that there is no *prius* and *posterius* in the belief of the infallibilities of the Scriptures and of the Church, because there is no *posterius*, that of the Church being none at all.

**E. Teachers.**

*Fifthly*, nor are the words and doctrine of our teachers and ministers to be looked upon as an infallible rule of divine faith. A private Christian ought to be very observant of his Pastour, (the Scripture every-where calls for it) he is to reverence him as his spirituall Father, to obey him as his governour, to follow him as his guide, yet no farther then he ha's the Scripture for his warrant; *Be ye followers*

lowers of me (saith the Apostle) as I am of Christ, 1 Cor. 11.1. The words of a godly and able pastour are of great authority, as of one that for his *fidelity* would not willingly for a world lead souls into error; and for his *ability* hath a greater measure of the spirit of discerning, joyned with the advantages of acutenesse of parts, much study and reading, and long experience, & therefore must he be heard with reverence, & not rashly disbelieved, nor his doctrine rejected, unlesse upon examination we find it to be condemned by the Scriptures. Among humane authorities, such an ones testimony is of very great weight: but a divine faith will digge till it come to the rock of infallibility, before it build; which is not to be found save in that holy breath of the unchangeable Spirit, which is the Scriptures.

Sixthly therefore, the onely true adequate and infallible rule of divine faith is the holy Scripture: this is that *κανὼν* *Scriptures* *μετρώμενον*, & ἀνα-ίσχυρος, this is that balance of the sanctuary, wherein faith weighs and tries all mens doctrines before it entertain them.

That this was infallibly inspired by the Holy Ghost is granted on all sides; and that it may be known to be such may sufficiently appeare by what hath been already said. That it is and ought to be the rule of faith, might be fully and at large demonstrated; but since it hath already devoured all the other pretended rules, as *Aaron's* rod did those of the *Egyptian* Sorcerers, and because I would not be prevented in that which lies before me, I shall content my self briefly to have pointed at an argument or two, and so passe on to what remains.

But first give me leave to premise onely thus much, that whereas some of our Divines make Scripture the judge, others the rule of controversies, I conceive by a little distinguishing both may be admitted, and that the Scripture

## Prove all things.

is both *Judge*, and *Sentence*, the *Law*, *Rule* and *Principle* of faith. The holy Ghost in Scripture is the *Judge*. Every truth exprest in Scripture is a definitive *Sentence* when ever it self is called in question, and in respect of truths deducible from it it is a *Law* and *Principle*; in respect both of truths formally contained in it, and rightly deducible from it, it is, and may be truly called a *Rule* or canon of faith and life; a rule to try and examine doctrines by, and this I shall prove briefly in three words thus.

1. The *Bereans* are commended by the holy Ghost for making the Scripture the rule and trying doctrines by it, and that such doctrines as were delivered by the immediate assistance of the holy Spirit, as was said before.

2. The Scripture is the rule according to which men ought to preach, and therefore also ought their doctrine to be examined by it. *To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no morning-light in them, Isaiah 8. 20. and 1 Tim. 6. 3. These things teach and exhort, and if any man teach otherwise, [ or any other thing ἡρεσισμὸν αὐτῶν ] and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud knowing nothing, &c. [ See also Deut. 13. v. 1, 2, 3. ] and in the 12. Rom. 6. Let us prophesie according to the analogy or proportion of faith, by which is usually understood the doctrine contained in the Scriptures. But that is a remarkable place Gal. 1. 8, 9. If we or an angel from heaven, if any man preach any other Gospel than what ye have received, let him be accursed.*

3. The Scripture is the rule by which we must be judged at the last day, therefore ought it to be the rule of our faith and life here. *Rom. 2. 16. God shall judge the secrets of men according to my gospel: and this we may be sure of that*

that that must needs be suitable to *God's* will accepting and approving, which is agreable and according to the same will commanding and prescribing faith and duty to us, which is revealed in his word. But this truth having been so much insisted upon by our writers, and being so well known as it is, I forbear further enlargement on it at the present. The *Scripture* then is the onely rule of faith: And though some would admit of something else for a secondary rule, for my part I see not how that can be admitted: for, if that same supposed secondary rule do exactly accord with the *Scripture*, then is it not another, and so not a secondary rule: but if it swerve never so little from it, then is it false and erroneous, and not fit to be a rule at all: but take it at the best it is but *regula regulanda*, a rule that must be tried it self; and who will choose to measure with a Carpenters rule when he hath the standard by him?

The *Scripture* is the rule and the standard by which all doctrines may and must be tried, by arraigning them before the tribunall of the Spirit in the Scriptures: but it will not be amisse to draw forth of *Scripture* a character or two to judge of doctrines by.

1. The first shall be that of *Paul*, but lately mentioned; *Mark* 16. good doctrine must be according to the analogy and proportion of faith. There is a *ἡ ὁμοιότης τῆς ἀληθείας*, an *ὁμοιότης τῆς ἀληθείας* *ἀνόντων λόγων*, and a *μόρφωσις τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ ἀληθείας* spoken of in *Scripture*; a *body* of divine truth, as I may call it, between the parts and members whereof there is an exact harmony, symmetry, and proportion: as therefore in the natural body a member would become monstrous, should it exceed its due proportion to the other its fellow-members: so is it here. We must therefore carefully compare a doctrine concerning one article, with the truth concerning others, and (for instance) so speak of the unity of *God's* essence

essence as not to impair the Trinity of persons; so treat of the justice of God, as not to let it devour his mercy, and so to advance his mercy as not to violate his justice, since he is so said to be love, 1 *John* 4. 8. as that he is also called a consuming fire, *Heb.* 12. 29. Let a man study a single point alone with greatest accuratenesse, it will scarce have its just proportion till he doth compare it with the body; notwithstanding the best diligence of the artist, the wheels of a watch will need some filing when they come to be put together.

Mark 2.

2. A second character is that of *S. John* 1. 4. 3. Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: of old whatsoever Prophet inticed the people unto idolatry, was a false Prophet for all his signes and wonders, and prediction of events, *Deut.* 13. 1, 2, 3. So whatsoever doctrine tends to draw us off from Christ is nought and to be rejected: and thus do not onely the Jews who deny that Christ is yet come: but the Socinian also, who denies him to be God, and so by consequence to have come in the flesh, in the Apostle's sense, and to have made any satisfaction for sinne, which was the end of his coming: and the Papists also while they undermine him in all his offices: and what do the Quakers but in effect deny Christ, when they make him to be nothing else but a Metaphor, and the Gospel a meer Allegory?

Mark 3.

3. The third mark is our Saviours own, *Matth.* 7. 16. By their fruits ye shall know them: observe what the aims and designs are of those that promote them; judge not rash judgement, but observe the end. A meteor may sometimes seem to be in heaven under the immediate tuition of some reall starre, but let us watch the parallax, and we shall find it many thousand miles below. Some fowls there are that will hang hovering in the aire, as if it were indifferent



to them whether ever they came to earth again or no: and yet if you observe them it is ten to one but you shall see them alighting in some puddle or other. The Eagle soars high, very high, when her designe is nothing but carion. It will therefore be our wisdom to observe carefully the tendencies of doctrines, and their fruits: if these be profaneness or confusion, the doctrines themselves cannot be from God; for he is an holy God, and not the authour of confusion.

And thus much be spoken concerning the second requisite to the proving of doctrines, to wit, the *Rule*, and so I have done with the duty it self.

But here the *Romanist* pulls me by the sleeve with an objection or two, which must be satisfied.

*Obj. 1.* And first he objects that this would be pride and *Object. 1* arrogance to examine the doctrines of our superiours, as if private men knew more than they.

*Ans. 1.* It is no pride nor arrogance for us to endeavour to see that with our own eyes, which our betters tell us they see with theirs, especially sith God himself requires it of us. *Ansiv.*

2. It is no whit unbecoming humility and Christian modesty to examine any mens doctrine, while we acknowledge their superiority in gifts, and reverence them accordingly. They discern an hundred truths to my ten, yet some of ten may possibly be none of their hundred. I must not reject their doctrine without *examen*, out of reverence unto them: I may not trust to it as infallible out of reverence unto God: I must therefore examine it by that golden rule the Scriptures, which is no disparagement to them or to their doctrine: for, so ought they to preach, and so ought we to believe. If any man preach, let him preach as the oracles of God, and we must so heare and entertain the

Gospel, not as the word of man, but as it is indeed the word of God able to save our souls, see 1 Thess. 2. 13.

Object. 2. Obj. 2. O! but people are so ignorant they are not fit to judge.

Ans. Whose faults that? you keep them from the Scriptures, and the Scriptures from them, and then say with the Pharisees, *This people who knoweth not the law are accursed, John 7. 49.* Well; but if they must not judge of the doctrine, what must they do to be resolved whether the Protestants or the Papists doctrine be to be followed? *de Valentia* tells them, they must adhere to that doctrine whose teachers have the most authority, but how shall they know that? why forsooth, by their multitude, sanctity, antiquity and miracles. Which is all one as if he had said: Because thou art not book-learned thou art not fit to examine doctrines by Scripture; therefore take onely this course, travell over all the world, and count how many Papists there be, and then how many Protestants, and by the way enquire into their lives; then read but over the histories of all ages, and see which were the most ancient: and lastly, take notice of the number of miracles that have been done, (but let him believe none but those who saw them done) and then thou shalt know which doctrine is the truest; (at least if these marks fail him not)

Now I think I should set the poore man an easier task, if I should bid him read, or get some other to read the Scriptures to him, and there he should see what he might trust unto. The necessary points of faith are cleare enough laid down there for any ordinary apprehension: and such an one is as capable of the *donum intellectus* (without which none can savingly understand) as a more learned man; and I am sure the Scripture is the best *collyrium*, which doth not onely cleare the sight, but also enlighten the eyes, and that of babes and simple ones.

Obj. 3.

*Obj.* 3. But thirdly they object. When you have done all, every private Christian will be fallible in his judgement; why then do ye refuse the Fathers, Councils, and the Church upon that account? *Object.* 3

*Ans.* 1. I am speaking of an infallible Rule, not an infallible Judge: if the Faculty be fallible, the Rule at least had need be infallible. It is true, an house that is built on a rock may fall, if it be weakly built; but that which is built upon the sand cannot possibly stand: he that walks upon firm ground may stumble, and fall; (and rise again) but he that walks upon a quake-mire must needs sink, and that irrecoverably, when the ground it self sinks under him. *Ans.*

2. But thus much I shall say for the believers infallibility. (1.) That while he keeps to the infallible rule he cannot erre. (2.) The Spirit of God will infallibly guide every believer, so as that he shall not swerve from the rule in any thing necessary to salvation. (3.) Nor in any point whereof it works in him a divine faith, which is as good security as is needfull, and a thousand times better then the Papists can give to any by believing in the Church.

So that these few rubs being removed out of the way, we may safely proceed to the practise of what the Apostle here exhorts us to, to *prove all things*.

*Age verò, nē semper forum.* But we must not be alwayes trying; triall is in order to holding fast, and that not of all things, but of that which upon triall we find to be good. So the Apostle proceeds, *hold fast that which is good*.

Which is the second part of the text, containing in it the second duty incumbent upon every Christian, *viz.* holding fast of that which is good. Which I shall speak unto first relatively, and then absolutely. *2. Part of the text considered.*

*First*, relatively as it hath reference and regard unto the former. *2. Relatively.*

former duty. And so we may look upon these later words, either 1. as a caution, or 2. as a means, or 3. as the end of the foregoing duty of proving doctrines.

As  
a caution.

*First*, let us consider them as a *caution*, and then they intimate thus much unto us; That we must so try and prove all things, as i'th' mean while not to let go that which is good. They that fish with a golden hook, had need hold fast the line, and look to the ground they stand upon. We must have a firm *basis* and centre to trust unto, or else the motion can neither be sure nor regular. If once we loose our anchor, no wonder if we be *ἀναρριζωμένοι*, carried about by every blast of temptation from without; and if we cast our ballast over-board, we must needs be *κλυδωνιζόμενοι*, tost up and down by the wave of every doubt, and so become the sport and scorn of every wind and wave. And I could heartily wish that some of late had not sailed so farre upon new discoveries, till they have lost their compasse, and so made shipwrack of faith and conscience both together. But if we desire to be successfull in our enterprize of trying and proving doctrines, we must be sure to hold fast all tried and approved principles: and

1. Such as are unquestionable, or out of question; we must not go to call them into question; this were for us to be alwayes laying the foundation, so should we never build; to be alwayes learning, but never coming to the knowledge of the truth, weak and unstable souls. When truths are once tried and approved, we must then study arguments for them, answer difficulties brought against them, and contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered unto the Saints.

2. We may examine an article of faith without doubting of the truth of it. But suppose it should be called into question by others, yea, and doubted of also by our selves,  
yet

yet must we not presently for every doubt let go our faith, nor quit it for every argument that's brought against it, though we cannot answer it. A man may have strong demonstrations for a truth, yet not be able to vindicate it from all objections, whence scruples will arise; but they may and must be overcome by believing and attending to the demonstrations and evidence for the truth, though we be not able to acquit our selves of those difficulties, which the devils sophistry, and our own infidelity may suggest. We must not disclaim a truth because it is by some called in question; much lesse ingenuously do they deal by truth, who therefore disclaim it, that so they may call it into question themselves. We may not disbelieve a truth and scrape it out of our souls, that so the soul may become *rasa tabula*, unbiassed and perfectly indifferent either to receive a truth, or to reject it; as our new methodists would have us do. *That there is a God* is an article of faith, and a first notion ingraved upon the heart of man by nature. Should I now go and not onely forbear my assent unto it, but also imagine the contrary to counter-poise the souls naturall <sup>power</sup> and inclination? blot out that *vous ne savez*, to try if I can write it better? What were this else but to lay faith to stake, and throw the die for it, to part with principles that we may try conclusions; to deny the truth that we may recover it again by syllogismes; to cast a jewell into the sea, to see whether we can dive and fetch it up again; with the Mountebank to wound for experiment; and become Atheists that we may convert our selves by reason; to tempt *God* to leave us, and to tempt the devil to destroy us. For my part, I professe, I see not how this can be put in practise without being guilty of sinne and blasphemy. Let us therefore hold fast the truth by a stedfast faith, while we are examining doctrines, and by holinesse of life also; for, the devils great

gains these late times have been, that while men are taken up with disputes about truths in question, they have too much neglected the practise of those that were indubitable.

*A means.*

*Secondly*, we may look upon this latter duty as a *means* to help to the better performance of the former; if we hold fast the truth which we already have, we shall the more successfully prove the doctrines, and find out the truth; he that's faithfull in a little, ha's the promise of being ruler over much; he that yields obedience unto truth, shall know more of it: if any man will do the will of God, he shall know the doctrine whether it be of God or no, *John 7. 17.* whereas on the contrary, a corrupt heart will breed a corrupt judgement, and either hinder the entertainment of truth at the first, or else procure the ejection of it afterwards out of the soul: but more of this hereafter.

*An end.*

*Thirdly*, we might also look upon these later words as the *end* of the foregoing duty: let this be your aim and designe in proving all things, to wit, that you may *hold fast* that which is good. Have recourse unto the Scriptures that you may know what is good, have recourse unto Scriptures that you may believe it: for, *hac scripta sunt ut credatis*, the ensuring of our faith was the end of the writing of the Scriptures. This then condemns Scepticisme, and the *Academicks ἀναδιδόντες*. Again, prove all things that you may *practise* that which is good, not that you may entertain your selves with jejune and idle speculations; the end and fruit and perfection of knowledge is practise: knowledge is a precious talent, which is given unto us not to be hidden in a napkin, but that we should *ὑποζεύξωμεν*, trade or work with it. Unless the fruits of good living do grow upon the tree of knowledge, it will never become to us a tree of life. I shall leave others to dispute where Paradise was situate, but our Saviour ha's placed happinesse between those

those two, the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge. *John 13. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* The more we know God, the more we love him, and the more we love him, still the more do we desire to know of him: so is it here, the end of the knowledge of truth is that we may practise it; and practise is a means of knowing more, as the water comes from the ocean to the fountains, and returns to it again by the rivers. *Col. 1. 9, 10. We desire that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spirituell understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord in all well-pleasing, (there's the first:) being fruitfull in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God, (there's the second).* Let it be our care therefore, brethren, so to try all things as not to let go our hold of the things that are good; and hold fast that which is good, that we may the better prove all things: and let this be the end of all our proofs and of all our trialls, that having found out that which is good, we may believe and practise accordingly. Thus have I done with the words in their relative consideration: I come now to speak to them absolutely and in themselves. 2. Absolutely.

## II. Sermon.

*Hold fast that which is good.*

**I**N handling whereof I shall briefly shew by way of explication; First, what is meant by *that which is good*. Secondly, what it is to *hold it fast*; and then proceed.

First, for the first, *that which is good*. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good. Worldlings they are, and worldly goods they mean, such as are corn, and wine, and oyl, & these they are apt enough to hold fast, *quocumq; modo rem,*



rem, and ---vestigia nulla retrorsum. Here they are close-fisted enough, what they get by diligence, they will keep with care, and need no exhortation to good husbandry. The good here spoken of is a greater good, and of another nature. Three things there are (as I conceive) very pertinent to the Apostle's scope, and the meaning of the words.

I. Τὸ καλόν, is τὸ ἀληθές for the Apostle speaking here about doctrines, it's impossible a doctrine should be good that is not true. To make one's word *good*, is to make it *true*. True doctrine is good doctrine. This was that καλὸν ἔθηκεν, that *good thing* committed to Timothy's charge, which S. Paul exhorts him for to keep, 2 Tim. 1. 14. and this is that which S. Paul himself kept: *I have fought a good fight, I have kept the faith*, 2 Tim. 4. 7. where *faith* is put for *truth*, the object of it: for 'tis no commendation to believe a lie, and to persist in error is but obstinacy. Our Saviour Christ commends the Church in Pergamus for holding fast his name: Rev. 2. 13. *Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith: my faith*, that is, either the true doctrine concerning me; or the true doctrine which I taught thee. So then Paul charges Timothy to keep the truth, he professes himself had kept it, and our blessed Saviour commends the Church in Pergamus for keeping of it; what hinders then but that we may conclude, that S. Paul exhorting the Thessalonians to hold fast *good* doctrine, did partly mean such as was *true*. Error has done us the mischief, and it must be *truth* must do us *good*.

2. Τὸ ἅγιον. Good doctrine is *holy* doctrine. All true doctrine is good, but holiness adds a greater degree of goodness to it. There are some truths which tend onely to enrich the understanding, and to accomplish the intellect; but there are others which do change and sanctify the heart, and make it good. That doctrine which is agreeable to the  
holy

holy and good will of God, and which tends unto sanctification, whereby we are made good, is holy and good doctrine, (as the Law is said to be *holy, and just, and good*, Rom. 7. 12.) in respect of the first it's called *the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God*, Rom. 12. 2. and as it relates unto our sanctification and salvation, it's called ἡ κατ' εὐσέβειαν διδασκαλία. 1 Tim. 6. 3. *The doctrine which is according to godliness.* λόγος ὑγιαίνωντος, 1 Tim. 6. 3. 2 Tim. 1. 13. λόγος ὑγιής. 2 Tim. 8. and ὑγιαίνουσα διδασκαλία. 2 Tim. 4. 3. *sound and wholesome words and doctrine. Sound*, not rotten, which will deceive a man if he trust unto it; and *wholesome* both for food and Physick, a nourishing word and an healing word. With this ἀδολον γάλα, this sincere milk of the word was Timothy nourisht and brought up, ἀπὸ βρεφῆς, from an infant; he suckt it in with his mothers milk, ἐντρφεύμενος τοῖς λόγοις τῆς πίστεως, καὶ καλῇ διδασκαλίᾳ, as the words are of him; 1 Tim. 4. 6. *nourished up in the words of faith, and of good doctrine*: which carries in it both a corrautive to eat off and subdue corruption, and also a cordiall to restore and comfort the fainting soul. That doctrine which is according to the will of God, is such as sanctifies the heart; for, *this is the will of God, even your sanctification*. This all truth cannot do, onely the truth of God, which is his word; whence it is that our Saviour prayes, *John 17. 17. Sanctifie them through thy truth, thy word is truth*. Such doctrine then as kills sinne and corruption, by purging it out of the soul, and restores the soul to a spirituall health, by working saving grace in the heart, and nourisheth it unto eternall life, by making it like unto God in righteousness and true holiness; such, I say, is *holy doctrine, and therefore good*.

3. Τὸ καλὸν ἰσὶ τὸ δοκιμὸν. that which is *tried and approved*. This is a further requisite in the doctrine which we are to hold fast. It may be true and holy in it self, but unlesse we

know it to be such, we are not yet sufficiently prepared to assent unto it. But now, when we have proved it, compared it with the rule, and brought it to the touch-stone, and tried in the furnace; and upon triall found it to be pure and true and good, then must we close with it and hold it fast: we must no longer doubt of it, or question the goodnesse of it. When the Assay-master has once tried a piece of gold, and it endures the test, he pronounces it to be good, and so it passes for current. So that if a doctrine be true, and not false doctrine; if it be holy and pure, and not corrupt doctrine; and if upon examination by the good word of *God*, we find it to be so, then 'tis good doctrine and such as we are here exhorted to hold fast.

Which is the *second* thing to be explained; viz. What it is κατέχειν, to hold it fast.

The word is sometimes used to signifie to detain, and so the truth is said to be detained, both when we conceal and keep it from the knowledge of others, and also when we depose it from bearing rule in our hearts, and keep it down from springing up and bearing fruit in our lives; this is πῶς ἀληθείαν κατέχουσιν ἐν ἀδικίᾳ. *Rom. I. 18. to detain the truth in unrighteousnesse*, to imprison and keep it in hold, and to withhold it from others, but not to hold it fast, as we are here commanded. Three things I conceive the word κατέχειν does here import.

1. To entertain, throughly to close with, to grasp and lay fast hold of that which is good; to enter upon and take possession of it; and so the word is used, *Matth. 21. 38. The husbandmen said, This is the heire, come let us kill him,* κατέχευον τὴν κληρονομίαν αὐτοῦ, *and let us seize upon his inheritance.* So should we not onely buy the truth, but also take livery and seisin of it, to have and to hold; seize upon it as the eagle does her prey, and the hungry man his food. Take fast hold of it, that's the first.

2. The

2. The word *κατέχευ* signifies to *retain*, to hold fast and keep possession; thus must we not let go our hold, nor quit our interest in truth, either through feebleness or fickleness, through want of strength or want of steadfastness; and thus the fruitfull hearers are said to be such as do *κατέχευ*, having heard the word do keep it in an honest and good heart, Luke 8. 15.

3. The word *κατέχευ* imports also the *maintaining* of truth; the holding of it fast, not onely as a possession, but also as a strong Hold or Castle, defending it against any that shall go about to oppose it, or to spoil us of it, and wrest it from us. This the Scripture expresses sometimes by the word *κρατεῖν*, which implies an holding fast by main strength, against any forcible or violent assault. Sometimes by *ἀντιχευ*, as in that place *Tit. 1. 9.* a Bishop must be *ἀντιχευ* one that holds fast the faithfull word according as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers: the word properly signifies to hold against: and this is the third thing implied in the word *κατέχευ*. You may see all three things together expressed in one verse, *Prov. 4. 13.* Take hold of instruction (there is the first), let her not go (there is the second), keep her; for, she is thy life: (there is the third.)

Thus much may serve in breif for the explication of the words, the sense whereof amounts to thus much.

That what-ever doctrine we do upon due triall by the 2. Doctr. word of God find to be true, according to Gods holy will, and tending to sanctification and salvation, we must take and keep fast hold of it, close with it thoroughly, and adhere to it immovably.

We must hold it fast, which we have also express to us in Scripture by standing fast in the faith, [1 Cor. 16. 13.] Continuing grounded, and settled in the faith, [Coloss. 1. 23.]

## Hold fast that which is good.

established in the truth, [ 2 Tim. 1. 12. ] by keeping the faith, [ 2 Tim. 4. 7. ] and continuing in it; as in that exhortation of S. Paul to Timothy. 2. epist. 3. chap. 14. vers. others are deceived, but continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.

Six wayes to  
hold fast  
truth.  
1. Believing.

Now we must hold fast that which is good these six severall wayes especially.

*First, By believing it stedfastly.* And here I shall shew briefly these two things, ( 1. ) That truth so tried and evidenced is to be *assented* unto and continued in, ( 2. ) That it must be assented unto by an assent of *faith*.

*First,* That it must be firmly *assented* to may appeare:

1. Because such an assent is *due unto truth* it self. Truth is the proper object of the understanding; and if the truth be presented with sufficient evidence, either of its own light, or of divine testimony, some question whether the understanding can suspend its assent; I am sure it ought not: if it do, the will is too blame, and must answer for it. And then this assent must be constant; *buy the truth, but sell it not*; for, it is above price, and if it be sold it must needs be undervalued.

2. Because such an assent is *necessary for us*, that the truth may do us good; we are saved by truth, but it is through the knowledge of it. The truth shall make us free, but then we must suffer it to unty us, which it cannot do unlesse it be entertained by us. The potion, be it never so soveraign, cannot cure us unlesse we drink and take it in. Our Saviour prayes, *keep them through thy truth*; but if we would have truth keep us, then we must be sure to keep it; it is like a fortress. What a losse then must the *Sceptick* needs be at, who assents to nothing? how unsatisfied is his mind? how unprovided is his soul? what a trembling, wavering, and uncertain

certain thing is he? S. James tells us that a *double-minded man is unstable in all his wayes*, ( 1. 8. ) and if a doubting man be *ἀνὴρ διψύχης*, then surely a Sceptick is *μυεῖς ψυχῆς*, of a thousand severall minds, or rather *ἀψύχης*, having no soul or mind at all, choosing to loose his soul rather than be at the charge of entertaining truth, or maintaining an opinion: like *Socrates*, he goes to the market to buy nothing, thinking that he hath no need of any thing. In his soul he is quodlibeticall, in his life he is *ἀκατάστατος*, as S. James speaks *unstable*, and indeed disorderly in all his wayes: as the word may be interpreted, the divers lusts after which he is carried and goes a whoring, will not suffer him to wed and plight his faith to any truth.

In little better condition is the *fickle* and unconstant man, who is continually fluttering up and down from one opinion to another, never settling nor abiding by any. He entertains truth by the day; he takes it in, but it staves not with him, being distempered with a kind of intellectual *diabetes*. Truth can never nourish such a man, nor will he ever be rooted and grounded in it, who is alwayes flitting and removing. But we must have the truth dwelling in us, we must assent unto it firmly, that is the first.

*Secondly*, As we must firmly assent unto the truth, so must we do it by an assent of *faith*. Ἐξ ἑκαστοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν ἐκείνων λόγον ἐσθὲν. 2 Tim. 1. 13. *Hold fast the form of sound words in faith*, and hence it is that doctrine is called *faith* in Scripture, *fides quæ creditur*. Many truths there be, which a man may have a natural knowledge of, he may see the truth in all its avenues and principles, as also in the necessary issues and consequences of it, and from them be able to make it out to the rational apprehensions of other men: But besides this knowledge, there is another kind of assent found in all believers, *quæ tales*, given to a truth onely in re-

*Hold fast that which is good.*

spect to the divine testimony: this is faith; which though it be much helped by that other assent, when in conjunction with it, yet it is often found without it; and this is that assent upon which God will have our salvation to depend: and this must we therefore yield unto truth.

1. Because this is *God's way* wherein he will save souls, by Faith, not by Philosophy, although it may be man would have liked that way best; *but it pleased God through the foolishnesse of preaching, to save them that believe*, that the glory of the power might be of God. S. Paul tells us *2 Thess. 2. 13.* that *God hath from the beginning chosen you to Salvation through Sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:* and on the other side our Saviour tells us plainly and without a parable, *he that believes not shall be damned, Mark 16. 16.*

2. Because this way of faith makes most for a *Christians security* against falling away. Faith takes the surest and fastest hold of truth. *By faith ye stand, 2 Cor. 1. 24.* but *if ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established, Isai. 7. 9.* אִם לֹא תִאֱמֵנוּ כִּי לֹא הָאֱמֵנוּ. Faith and firmnesse are very neare of kind in the originall; the word for faith grows upon a root that signifies *to nourish*, no danger then of withering or fading away; the just by faith shall live, shall indure, shall persevere, *Heb. 10. 38.* And it signifies to be firm also. Hence τῇ πίστει τεθεμελιωμένοι, καὶ ἰσχυροί, καὶ ἀκίνητοι. *Being grounded, and settled, and unmoved through faith*, as it may be well translated, *Col. 1. 23.*

But wherein may some say doth this great strength of faith lie? or how comes it to be so sure an hold-fast?

I answer briefly.

1. It is in its own nature a depending grace, and doth chain the soul to God, who is *Adon* an immoveable basis, even truth it self. Its root is fastened in God, and from him it draws and sucks continuall supply of strength and nourishment;



richment; yea further, it doth link the soul to *God's* truth by a mutual clasping of hands, as it were. The soul layes hold on *God* by faith, and *God* holds our faith in his own *almighty* hand, ( and none can take it thence ). If faith do shrink and faint at any time, yet *God almighty* will not let go his hold, and so long no danger of Apostasie. This mutuall complication we may see variously exprest in Scripture. Sometimes the doctrine of faith is said to be *delivered* unto the Saints, *Jude* 3. Sometimes they are said to be *delivered* into that, *Rom.* 6. 17. Sometimes we are said to be in the truth, and on the other side, that to be in us; we to *abide* in that, and that to *dwell* in us; we to *keep* that, and that again to *keep* us. Our faith and *God's* truth are as it were mutuall hostages and pawns between *God* and the believing soul. *God* he *engages* his truth to the soul, and the soul trusts *God* with its faith. *God* *deposits* his truth in the soul, and that again places its faith in *God*, and commits it self also into his hand by believing, *1 Pet.* 4. 19. *God* trusts *Paul* with his Gospel counting him faithfull, *1 Tim.* 1. 5. as an Ambassadour, *2 Cor.* 5. 19. as a steward, *1 Cor.* 4. 1. and *Paul* again trusts *God* with his soul: for, he knew whom he had trusted, *2 Tim.* 1. 12. In which verse also we reade of *Paul's* παρακαταθήκην which was in *God's* keeping, and in the next verse but one we heare of another παρακαταθήκην committed to *Timothy's* trust and keeping; *If we keep God's truth, he will keep our souls.* *Christ* hath praied, and *God* hath promised that our faith should not fail, but he never did so much for our rational knowledge. There is faith's first advantage.

2. The second advantage which faith hath above other knowledge in holding fast the truth against temptation and persecution, is this: That in believing the soul rests it self upon the veracity and infallibility of *God*: whereas in other knowledge it relies upon the goodnes of its own eye-sight,  
in

in observing the principles & consequents, the pedigree and off-spring of truth, wherein it is very subject to be mistaken, and is oftimes imposed upon. The Devil will sooner perswade a man's reason that the world was not created, by raising difficulties and puzzling his arguments; than he can perswade a believers faith that *God* is fallible, who sayes it was created. The Devil wants no sophistry; the more we have to do with syllogisme and deduction, the more room will he find to get in his nails. Again, faith overcomes the flatteries and frowns of the world by seeing through them; it believes *God* and dare not offend him: knows what heaven is, and will not be cheated of it, as a child for a butterflie: it knows what hell is and fears *God* rather than men, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. Thus doth faith overcome the world by believing the promises and threatnings of *God*, and thus hath faith a preeminence over all our natural knowledge as to closing with and keeping possession of the truth. Knowledge, that holds, it may be, till a better Oratour, or a more subtile disputant come; but when we shall be beaten from these out-works, faith will be a citadel that will hold out against all opposition: for, by it the heart is fixed trusting in *God*, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

Thus have you the first way of holding fast that which is good: *viz.* by *believing it steadfastly*. I shall be briefer in those that follow.

2. *Loving.*

*Secondly*, We must hold fast that which is good by *loving it unfeignedly*. We have truth here presented to us under the notion of good, and surely then we cannot but love it; goodnesse being loves load-stone, and the proper object about which it is conversant.

When once the soul having entertained truth doth tast and relish it, delight and take pleasure in it, then doth it cleave

cleave unto it, as *David's* soul did to *Jonathans*. Love is an uniting affection, twining it self about the thing beloved, and if it be in an intense degree, the thing may possibly by violence be torn from its embraces, but it will first raise all its posse to prevent it. And therefore the Apostle *Paul* bids *Timothy* to hold fast the form of sound words, as in faith, so in love, 2 Tim. 1. 13. and by this we are said to cleave unto that which is good. Rom. 12. 9. *Let love be without dissimulation, abhorre that which is evil, and cleave to that which is good.* Κολλῦμένοι τῷ ἀγαθῷ, being glewed to it, as it were; which is by love, as the opposition there shews. That we be not as children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, but that we may grow up unto him who is the head and so κρατεῖν τὸν κεφαλὴν, we must ἀνδρῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ, Ephes. 4. 15. Follow the truth in love, not out of fanisie, as children do. That Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, we must be rooted and grounded in love, Ephes. 3. 17. and therefore where the love of truth once decays, there truth it self staies not long after it. We reade of some, Rom. 1. 28. who not liking to retain God in their knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate mind. And it a remarkable place that of, 2 Thess. 2. 10, 11, 12. where it is said that the man of sinne should come after the working of Satan, with all power and signes and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousnesse in them that perish. See what becomes of those who are deceived by the man of sinne, they perish, and if ye ask why so, the words following will give you an answer, *Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.* See there how necessary the love of truth is to salvation. For indeed, where there is no sincere love of the truth, there can be no true belief of it. For as the Apostle there goes on, *For this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they should believe a lie, that they all*

might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousnesse. Observe the opposition. A sad place it is, and I wish it were well considered by all that are so coldly affected to the truth; especially by such as hate it, and are so much inclined in their minds and affections to the errors of that man of sinne, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and will destroy with the brightnesse of his coming, as he there threatens. In the 10 verſe 'tis, they received not the love of the truth: and by the 12 verſe 'tis come to they believed not the truth: they had loſt the truth for want of love to it. Would we hold truth faſt, we muſt hold it in corde as well as in capite, hold it faſt by loving it unfainedly.

3. Remem-  
bring.

Thirdly, hold faſt that which is good by remembering it faithfully. and doubtleſſe where truth is believed and beloved, the mind will often be upon it, *qua curant meminert.* 1 Cor. 15. 1, 2. Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the Goſpel which I preached unto you, which alſo you have received, and wherein ye ſtand, by which alſo ye are ſaved, *ἐν τῇ εὐαγγελίᾳ*, if ye hold faſt, & keep in memory what I preached unto you, unleſſe ye have believed in vain. Thoſe that do truly believe the truth will be carefull to keep it in memory, which is a ſpeciall means to preſerve the faith and love of it in their hearts. Memory holds faſt the truth, while faith and love renew their acts upon it: for this cauſe ought we to give the more earneſt heed to the things that we have heard, *ὡς ὅτι ἀπομιμνήσκου*, leſt we leak and let them ſlip, and ſo we (that I ſay not they) be ſpilt and periſh irrecoverably; Heb. 2. 1. The Spirit of God confirms us in the truths taught, by bringing them to our remembrance. The Scriptures were written that we might believe, that by hearing them preached, by frequent reading them and meditating upon them (as David did) we might have faith begotten & increaſed in us. Therefore we ought to re-

these duties to be taken up with these duties. As *Paul* to *Timothy*:  
*The minister* is appointed for a remembrancer to us: *1 Tim.*  
*4. 6.* If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things,  
 then shalt thou be a good minister of *Jesus Christ*: and when  
*S. Paul* himself went over again the cities where he had formerly  
 preached the word, the text tells us what the success was,  
*And so were the Churches established in the faith, Acts 16.*  
*5.* And *S. Peter* thought it meet as long as he continued in  
 his earthly tabernacle, to put Christians in remembrance of  
 the truths delivered, that so they might have them alwayes  
 in remembrance after his decease: and that although they  
 knew them already: *2 Pet. 1. 12.* Wherefore I will not be  
 negligent to put you alwayes in remembrance of these things, though  
 you know them, and be established in the present truth. Though  
 they were already established, and therefore might seem  
 not to need putting in remembrance, (which is the means of  
 establishment) yet the Apostle thought it meet to do it al-  
 wayes, even as long as he lived; for, it would further confirm  
 them, and be a means to keep them from falling from their  
 stedfastnesse, and to persevere in holding fast that which is  
 good.

Fourthly, another way of holding fast that which is good *4. Practi-*  
 is by practising it conscientiously. To keep the command-*sing.*  
 ments is to obey them. *Jesus Christ* tells his disciples, *John*  
*15. 10.* If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love:  
 as many branches as bring forth fruit abide in the vine, and  
 are fastened in it by the sap they draw. *S. John 1. epist. 3. c.*  
*last verse,* He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him,  
 and he in him, and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the  
*Spirit which he hath given us.* *S. Peter 2. epist. 1. chap.*  
 exhorts to give all diligence to adde unto faith vertue, tempe-  
 rance, godlinesse, charity, and the rest of the graces there  
 reckoned up, for, if these things be in you and abound, they will

# Hold fast that which is good.

make you fruitfull in the knowledge of *Jesus Christ*, they will put forth themselves into acts; and what then? *vers. 10. If ye do these things ye shall never fall.*

Of times custome engages men to continue in evil practises, while they are ashamed of their principles; but when good practises are backt with good principles, the engagement is the stronger to continue in them and defend them. An honest and good heart having heard the word, keeps it, and brings forth fruit with patience. A good heart is the fittest cabinet to keep the good word of *God* in. And indeed, when once the word is ingrafted upon the soul by faith, it over-rules the sap of the stock, and sanctifies the fruit. Truth being espoused to the soul by faith, and bedded by love, brings forth fruit unto holinesse, (faith working by love) and *proles firmat conjugium*. If we would be *steadfast and immoveable*, let us be *alwayes abounding in the work of the Lord*, *1 Cor. 15. 58.* If we would but *follow that which is good*, as we are exhorted in the *15 verse* before my text, we should find that one means, (and a good one too) of *holding fast that which is good.*

1. Profess-  
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*Fifthly*, a fifth way that we must hold fast that which is good, is by *professing of it constantly.* *S. Paul* was not ashamed to preach the Gospel, no more must we be ashamed to professe it: if we be, *Christ* will be ashamed of us another day. *Mark. 8. 38. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinfull generation, of him also shall the Sonne of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels.* And *whosoever shall deny him before men, him will he also deny before his Father which is in heaven, Matth. 10. 33.* *Christ* will have his truth owned by his followers. The devil indeed will allow men to professe truth, while they harbour error in their hearts; but *Christ* will not allow of such discord between heart and tongue;

tongue; *Corde creditur ad justitiam*, With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, Rom. 10. 10, 11. for, the Scripture saith, He that believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Profession is the badge of truth, and a fealty due to the God of truth. By constant profession of, and bearing witness to the truth, the truth it self is propagated, and Gods glory is advanced, and other professors of truth are much encouraged.

And when was there ever greater need of bearing witness to the truth, than at this day? when error does on every side so much abound. When the unclean spirits like frogs (bred of the slime of the earth) come out of the mouth of the dragon, then blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, Rev. 16. 15. Wherefore *κατέχουσιν τὸν ὁμολογίαν τῆς πίστεως ἀκριβῶς*, Let us hold fast the profession of our faith unmoved, without wavering, Heb. 10. 23. for, beloved, we count them happy which endure, James 5. 11. and our Saviour assures us more than once, that they that endure to the end shall be saved, Mat. 24. 13. Mark. 13. 13. Nay, himself encourages us from heaven, Rev. 2. 10. Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life: again, Hold that thou hast, let no man take thy crown, Rev. 3. 11. That's a fifth way of holding fast that which is good; by the constant profession of it.

Sixthly, the sixth and last way that I shall name, is by *contending for it earnestly*. Indeed, so long as a man can enjoy his house by an undisturbed possession, he need not contend about it; but when thieves shall attempt to break it open, when a robber shall set upon him for his purse, striving by violence to take it from him, then he must resolve to contend for it, if he mean to keep it. Now such is the condition of truth in this world, it's in a state militant, continually surrounded and beset with enemies, whose ring-  
6. Contend-  
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leader is Satan, the father of lies; who layes continuall siege to truth, not that he desires to have it himself, but that he may dispossesse others of it, and slight it when he ha's done. 'Twas but needfull then that the Apostle should exhort us, to *contend earnestly for the faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints, Jude 3.* They were betruſted with it as with a fort or caſtle; and it would be treachery or cowardise not to defend it to the laſt. And *Paul's* exhortation may be of ſingular uſe to us for our encouragement; *1 Cor. 16. 13. Watch ye, ſtand faſt in the faith, quit your ſelves like men, and be ſtrong.* A gallant ſpeech of a tried ſouldier, who had fought a good fight himſelf, and was now ready to receive his crown.

Now though it be the duty of every Chriſtian to contend for truth, and that earneſtly; yet every one in his own rank and order: for, *a man is not crowned except he ſtrive lawfully.* Private Chriſtians they muſt ſtrive by earneſt prayer to God, that his truth may have a free paſſage, and be victorious, while others, whom God hath given commiſſion and abilities, muſt alſo contend for it by preaching, diſputing, and writing in defence of it; all by ſuffering for it, yea, and dying in witneſſe to it, if God in his providence ſhould call them forth to it. Beloved, ye have not yet reſiſted unto blood, but ye know not what times may come; the clouds gather apace, and ſome begin to feare a ſtorm: it concerns us in wiſdome however to provide for the worſt; to be well-ſettled in the faith, to buckle on our harnelle, and to fortifie our ſelves in holy reſolutions: to ſtand to our arms having our loyns girt about with truth; and we had need have truth girt cloſe about us, elſe we may chance to have a lap of it cut off, and we never the wiſer, as *Saul's* ſkirt was by *David*, while he ſlept and perceived it not. Or elſe in time of perſecution we may deal with it, as the young man  
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in the Gospel did by his linen cloth, when the souldiers laid hold of him, *he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked, Mark 14. 51, 52.* Some (it may be) may think it but a nicety that some of the Primitive Christians stood upon, when they chose to sacrifice their own lives, rather than sprinkle a little frankincense upon an idol's censer. Some may imagine perhaps, that the Martyrs of later years were too straight-laced, many of them suffering upon the article of Transubstantiation: but died *Abner* as a fool? did those Worthies foolishly and needlessly cast away their lives? No surely: they understood well enough, that to deny the truth was to deny *Christ*, and worshipping the bread was no lesse than grosse idolatry; both grievous sinns, had they been lesse, they might not, they durst not have committed them, though to save their lives.

But as people and Ministers must contend for the truth, so *Magistrates* are not excused from it. What an abatement was it in the coats of \* divers of the Kings of Judah, (and those good Kings otherwaies) that idol-worship was tolerated and winkt at in the high-places, and not utterly rooted out. O, beloved, *God* is a jealous God; he will not endure his worship to be corrupted, and do we think he will suffer his truth to be adulterated? Will he not suffer the *worship of devils*, but will he permit *doctrines of devils*? Is not his truth precious to him, and is he not jealous over that? *God* will not endure those that worship another God besides him, nor those who tempt others to it: (reade over *Deut. 13.* especially 6, 7, 8, 9 verses) and is *Christ* contented that they should be tolerated who openly declaim against his Godhead; No certainly.

Our blessed *Saviour* blames the Church in *Thyatira*, for suffering *Jezebel* to seduce his servants, *Rev. 2. 20.* and he professes that he hates the doctrine of the *Nicolaitans*, and layes

\* *Asa,*  
1 Kings 15.  
14. So  
*Jeboash,*  
*Anasias,*  
*Azarias,*  
*Jotham,*  
*Jebohashaphat.*

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layes it heavily to the charge of the Church in *Pergamos*, that she suffered those that taught it. *Rev. 2. 14, 15. Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate: Repent, or I will come quickly and fight against them with the sword of my mouth.* The Church it self was for the generall, and the Governours of it orthodox, holding fast the faith, and that in the midst of persecution, (as *Christ* himself bears her witnesse) yet because there were some such hereticks in it, whom it had not suppressed, therefore *Christ* threatens her as you have heard: and 'tis observable, how he styles himself when he begins to speak to that Church, *These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two-edges, vers. 12.* O, my beloved, when I reade this I cannot but think, should now the Lord *Jesus Christ* from heaven thus endite *England*; Thou hast there in the midst of thee those that maintain the doctrine of the *Papists*, of the *Socinians*, of the *Arminians* (which things I hate): yea, thou sufferest those that publicly oppose my truth, revile my faithfull Ministers, blaspheme my word, yea, even deny my very Godhead. Should *Christ*, I say, plead thus against us, I beseech you sadly to consider it, what could we be able to answer for our selves? Beloved, if *Christ* be *God*, let us follow him, and let us follow him throughly, with a perfect heart. Let us not with *Gallio* think our selves unconcerned, and so stand by and look on, while truth and error fight it out. Say not, *God* stands not in need of our help; no more did he need the help of *Meroz*, (how mighty soever the enemies were) but if he please to make use of means, *Meroz* must afford her help, or else *Meroz* must be cursed. And though the Lord could have wrought the deliverance of his people, and rescued them from the cruelty of cursed *Haman*, by an out-stretched and immediate arm from heaven; yet

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*Mordecai* is bold to tell Queen *Esther*, that if she held her peace, she and her fathers house should be destroyed, and deliverance should come some other way, *Esther* 4. 14.

Neither let any man say, Let truth alone, it will be sure to prevail and be victorious. For, be it true, that not all the malice and subtilty of Satan, nor all the powers of darkness shall ever be able to make any one syllable of the truth of God prove false; though they should *caelum terramque miscere*, heaven and earth should passe away; but not the least *iota* of Gods truth should fail, yea though they do *Acheronta movere*, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it: all this we grant and avow: yet let me tell you that truth would be truth though never a man in *England* did acknowledge it. The truth of the Gospel abides still, though the seven once famous churches of *Asia* be at this day engulphed in the abyss of Mahumetan superstition. It is not truth in the *Idea*, but in the *subject* that we are to contend for; not truth in heaven, but *truth upon the earth* that we must be valiant for, *Jeremy* 9. 3. God doth not require of us that we should make his truth to be true, but that we should entertain it in our hearts, and hold it fast: that we should own it, and countenance it, and maintain it in its possession of our selves and others, that so the truth may runne and be glorified, and God may be glorified amongst us: lest for our ingratitude, and want of zeal for his truth he remove the candlestick, and bestow it upon some other Nation. Then our crown is gone, our glory is departed, our day is done. And *England* will be nothing else but a kennel, and den of night-monsters, *Ziim* and *Fim* and *Ochim*, with the rest of that dismall crew: and so much the more dark then it was before it entertained the faith of *Christ*, by how much a blaze of thorns doth leave the house darker then it found it. When the light of the Gospel shall be re-

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moved, the Prince of darknesse will double his guards, and heap on irons, even chains of darknesse. O let it therefore be our care to hold fast the truth while we have it, to contend for it earnestly, that we be not spoiled and robbed of it. But that we may contend aright take these two rules.

1. It must not be out of contentiousnesse: a minister is forbidden being contentious, and yet is commanded to contend, and that earnestly for the faith. A quarelsome contentious humour will raise up strife about words when there is no ground, or *fundamentum in re*. A proud man (though perhaps orthodox in his judgement) will not content himself with the received form of sound words, the usuall language of Christians in all ages, but will invent a new set of phrases and uncouth expressions, which no man else can without pain (it is well if himself can) understand. He will not trade with the world but in a coin and language of his own; what a troublesome man is this, that imposeth upon the world a necessity of making new Dictionaries if they mean to converse with him? if every man should do the like, what a pretie *Babel* should we have? and all this is but that he may seem to be singular and to differ something from other men. But we must not contend out of a φιλονεικία, but ἐκ ἀληθείας, not out of a love of contention, or affectation of singularity, but out of a sincere love and affection to the truth, and a pure zeal for the glory of God. Neither may we make these pretensions of our own private quarels, as too many are apt to do. I have read of one *Matthias King of Hungary*, and one *George a King of Bohemia*, that fought a ten years warre upon a difference in point of Religion, and then at length agreed that their two fools should decide the controversie by fifty-cuffs. By the warre they shewed how much they pretended to truth and religion,

religion, and by the way of agreement how little indeed they cared for it: and I think, if *Plutarch* were now alive, it would be no hard matter for him to find a parallel.

2. Our zeal and contention for the truth must be proportionable unto the matter wherein it is: as fire burns hotter in iron than in straw: so must we contend more earnestly for truths of greater weight, moment, and importance, wherein the glory of God and the salvation of souls is more emphatically concerned. We must not contend for all alike, much lesse be more earnest for minth and cumine, and neglect the greater things, because our private stomach or other interest is bound up more in those than these. But I have now done with the sixth and last way of holding fast that which is good, *viz. contending for it earnestly.*

It now remains that I should close up all with a word of use and application, and very briefly.

*Use 1.* If then it be the duty of every Christian to hold *Use 1.* fast that which is good, hence then are to be *reproved* diverse sorts of persons, I will but point at them.

1. The Sceptick, that holds nothing at all.

2. Those that *hold fast* indeed, but it is that which is *not good*, that hold errors and heresies, and of these they are tenacious enough, even unto obstinacy: though brayed in a mortar they will not part with them. It is said of the Pharisees and their traditions, *Mark 7. 4. παραλαβον κρατιν*, they received them to hold them fast; they took them with a resolution not to let them go for better for worse. Zeal is good in a good matter, but this their holding fast is to their own mischief, as a sinking man holds fast the weeds that help to drown him.

3. This reproveth those that *hold*, and it is *good* which they hold, but they do not hold it *fast*: all wavering and in-

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constant persons. But these also I have already spoken something to in the foregoing part of my discourse.

*Use 2.* *Use 2.* I will therefore conclude all with a word of *exhortation*; which yet I perceive is nothing else than what I have been doing all this while. I will adde onely to what hath been said a motive or two, and a few means or directions.

*Motive 1.* 1. The first motive let be the consideration of our own concernment, how much it is our interest to hold fast that which is good. Truth is our *treasure*; and a wise man doth not use to be over-easily perswaded to part with that. 'Tis our *possession*; a man will sue hard before he will suffer himself to be ejected out of his inheritance. 'Tis our *evidence*; our evidence for a Kingdome, and shall we not look carefully to it? It is our *fortresse*; while we keep that, that will preserve us; like *Ulysses* his mast, tie our selves fast to it, and we shall be safe; yea 'tis our *life*, as Solomon of wisdom, *keep her; for, she is thy life*: our eternal salvation depends upon our holding of it. If we give over believing, *he that believes not shall be damned*: If we grow weary of well-doing, *without holinesse no man shall see God*: If any love not Christ and his truth, *let him be anathema*: If any man deny them before men, *him will Christ deny before his Father which is in heaven*. It is abundantly then our manifold *interest* to hold fast that which is good.

2. Hold truth fast considering the danger we are in of loosing it, in respect of *deceivers*, who would cheat us of it, and juggle it from us; in respect of open *enemies* that would by force wrest it from us: The Devil goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

And as at all times we had need to hold fast the truth, so especially in times of seduction and apostasie, in times of temptation, and in time of persecution; we had need to double



double our guards, when the Enemy is at hand. But of this before.

3. Let us consider how the Lord *Jesus Christ* stands affected towards his truth and such as adhere unto it. We may see both in his speech to the Church in *Pergamos*, *Rev. 2.13.* *Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, Even in those dayes when Antipas was my faithfull martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.* Observe how he doth aggrandise and amplifie their faithfulness to him and his truth, from the consideration of time and place; they adhered to him in times of persecution, and in a most dangerous place; *where Satan dwelleth.* He that was wont to go about like a roaring lion, and to go to and fro up and down the earth, had now it seems taken up in *Pergamos*, resolving to make that the seat of his tyranny, where he would display the bloody ensignes of his rage and cruelty; and yet in this very place, there were not wanting those, who under his nose, and to his very teeth did professe themselves the sworn servants of *Christ* and truth, and his utter enemies. What an honour was this to *Christ*, who maintained himself a Church in Satan's own Imperial city; and how kindly doth he take it from those, who at such a time and in such a place did stick so close unto him and to his truth? Which he calls *my faith*, and *my name*; he can as soon forget his own name and neglect his own glory, as his truth. But then, how feelingly, how pathetically doth he remember and (even by name) make mention of *Antipas*! In those dayes when *Antipas* was my faithfull martyr, &c. In those dayes, he keeps an exact account of the time, and makes *Antipas* his death the *Epocha* to compute other things by; when *Antipas*, he had kept *Christ's* name and you see *Christ* keeps his: he had born witness and set his seal unto *Christ's* truth, and *Christ* wears him as a

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signet upon his right hand, and engraves him upon the palms of his hands; he is neare and deare unto him, Christ knows him and calls him by name, *Antipas my faithfull martyr*. O what a pang of affection was there! Sirs, I am not able to conceive it, much lesse expresse it; I beseech you assist me with your thoughts, and supply by your meditations what my expression cannot reach, *Antipas my faithfull martyr*. Pretious in the sight of the Lord is the death of *all* his Saints, and blessed are they that die *in* the Lord; but much, much more pretious is their death, and thrice happy are all they whom the Lord calls forth and inables to die *for* his sake, and to lay down their lives in witness-bearing to his truth. I wonder no longer that the Primitive Christians were so ambitious of martyrdom; who would not be martyr many times over, to have such a testimoniall, such an affectionate commemoration from his blessed *Saviour*? which will afterwards be seconded with an *in vita*, well fought My sonne, and with that *Euge bone serve & fidelis*, well done good and faithfull servant, enter thou into thy masters joy.

*Direction*

So much for motive, now a few directions, which I will but name, leaving them to be enlarged by your own private meditations.

1. 1. That thou maist be sure to hold fast, take thy hold on that rock of diamonds, the holy Scriptures; for, sand will crumble and wash away.
2. 2. Make sure of heaven, and then sufferings will be light. *Facile est quidvis suadere persuasis mori*. Let me say *paratis mori*. They will not fear shipwrack, who have sent their souls before, and ensured them in heaven: that man need not fear death, whose life is hid with *Christ in God*.
3. 3. Turn all traitours out of thy heart, which else will betray both truth and thee. Such are lusts, hypocrisie, by-respects,

spects, curiositie, carelesnesse. Get thy self cured of thy natural levity and slipperinesse, it is good that the heart be established with grace.

4. Hold not too fast your own prejudicate opinions, if you mean to hold truth fast, or indeed to entertain it. For, then *non persuaseris etiamsi persuaseris*. They do but pretend to be suitours unto truth, who are before wedded to their own opinions.

5. Fifthly and lastly, grasp not the world too hard; for, *κῆται ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ*, and is seldome a friend to, sometimes incompatible with that which is good. Catch not at honour, applause, profit or interest in your holding of truth; these will winnow from truth sometime or other, and then the dog will hunt no longer in the roade when the hare hath left it, but Demas will take his leave of truth, and embrace the present world. I will end all in those words of the Apostle, 2 Thess. 2. and the later end. Therefore brethren stand fast, and hold the faith, which ye have been taught, which ye have believed.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

CUI LAUS IN SECUA.

FINIS.

W<sup>m</sup> Liford — see Wood's Athens Oxon. vol 2. p: 166. — son of W<sup>m</sup> Liford rector of Peynere near Woking in Berks — fellow of Magdalene Coll: Oxon — Minister of Sherborne in Dorsetshire. — He was much sought to & printed several sermons besides these three. — "at length this person who was of great modesty & virtue being tormented with a painful & sharp disease, by the Witchcraft as he said of certain quakers, surrendered up his pious soul to G<sup>d</sup>. on 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct<sup>r</sup>. 1653 & was buried under the communion table in the chancel of the church at Sherborne before mentioned — by his last will & testament he bequeathed to Magdalene college £120 towards the maintenance of a godly poor scholar thereof. &c. &c. — You may see more of him, his godly life & conversation &c. after his funeral sermon by W. H. D. D. —"

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